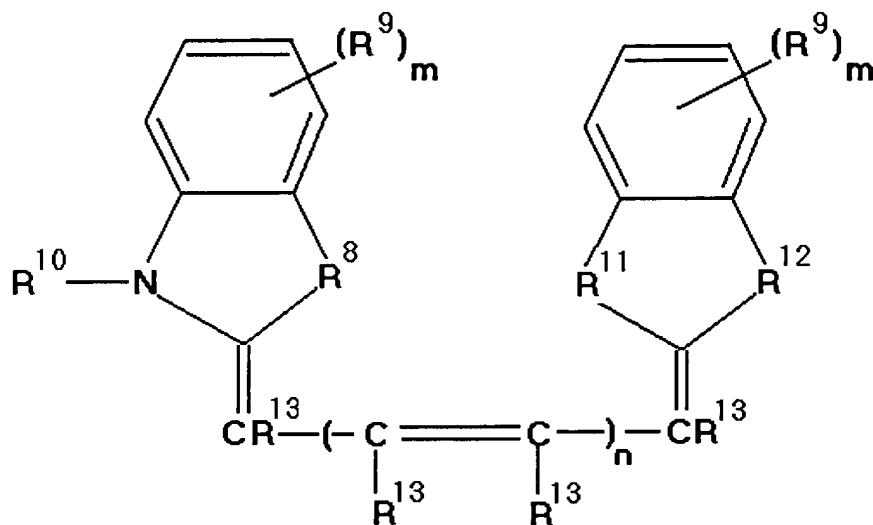


IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1-83. (Canceled)

84. (Currently amended) A fluorescent compound of the formula:



wherein:

each m is ~~1~~separately an integer ranging from 1-3;

n is an integer ranging from 0 to 25;

R⁸, R¹¹ and R¹² are separately CO, SO₂, C=C(CN)₂, S, O or C(CH₃)₂;

each R¹³ is hydrogen, alkyl, branched alkyl or heterocyclic ring derivatized with charged groups to enhance water solubility and enhance photostability;

each R⁹ and R¹⁰ is separately hydrogen, a charged group, a reactive group or an alkyl chain that can be derivatized with charged groups to enhance water solubility or with reactive groups for conjugation to other molecules;

wherein at least one R⁹ charged group or reactive group, or at least one R⁹ alkyl chain derivatized with a charged group is present on the compound; and

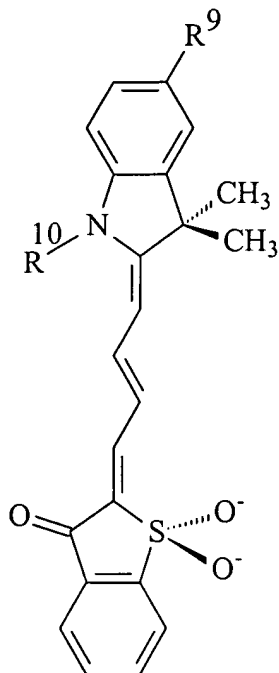
wherein each of said charged groups or reactive groups is separately SO_3^- , amide, ether, -NH-(C=O)-CH₂-halide, amine, maleimide, -N=C=O, -N=C=S, acyl halide, succinimidyl ester, sulfosuccinimidyl ester, sulfonyl halide, sulfonyl azide, alcohol, thiol, semicarbazide, hydrazine, hydroxylamine, carboxylic acid activated by carbodiimide, or COO-Rx, wherein Rx is phenol or naphthol.

85. (Previously presented) The compound of claim 84 wherein each R⁹ and R¹⁰ is separately hydrogen, -NH-(C=O)-CH₂-halide, sulfonate, amide or ether or an alkyl chain derivatized with -NH-(C=O)-CH₂-halide, sulfonate, amide or ether.

86. (Previously presented) The compound of claim 84 wherein each R⁹ and R¹⁰ is separately hydrogen, SO_3^- , amide, ether, -NH-(C=O)-CH₂-halide, amine, maleimide, -N=C=O, -N=C=S, acyl halide, succinimidyl ester, sulfosuccinimidyl ester, sulfonyl halide, sulfonyl azide, alcohol, thiol, semicarbazide, hydrazine or hydroxylamine or an alkyl chain that can be derivatized with SO_3^- , amide, ether, -NH-(C=O)-CH₂-halide, amine, maleimide, -N=C=O, -N=C=S, acyl halide, succinimidyl ester, sulfosuccinimidyl ester, sulfonyl halide, sulfonyl azide, alcohol, thiol, semicarbazide, hydrazine or hydroxylamine.

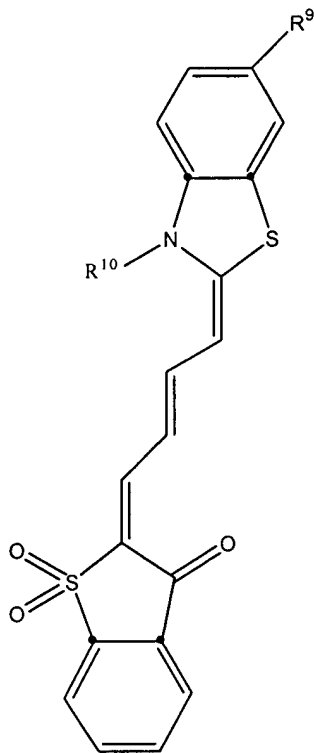
87. (Currently amended) The compound of claim 84 wherein ~~each~~ R⁹ and or R¹⁰ is ~~separately hydrogen, SO_3^- , amide, ether, carboxylic acid, alkali or alkaline earth metal salt of carboxylic acid, carboxylic acid activated by carbodiimide, acyl chloride, succinimidyl, sulfosuccinimidyl ester or COOR-x, wherein x~~ COO-Rx, wherein Rx is phenol or naphthol ~~further substituted by at least one strong electron withdrawing group~~ or an alkyl chain that can be derivatized with SO_3^- , amide, ether, carboxylic acid, alkali or alkaline earth metal salt of carboxylic acid, carboxylic acid activated by carbodiimide, acyl chloride, succinimidyl, or sulfosuccinimidyl ester ~~or COOR-x, wherein x is phenol or naphthol further substituted by at least one strong electron withdrawing group.~~

88. (Currently amended) The compound of claim 84 having the formula:



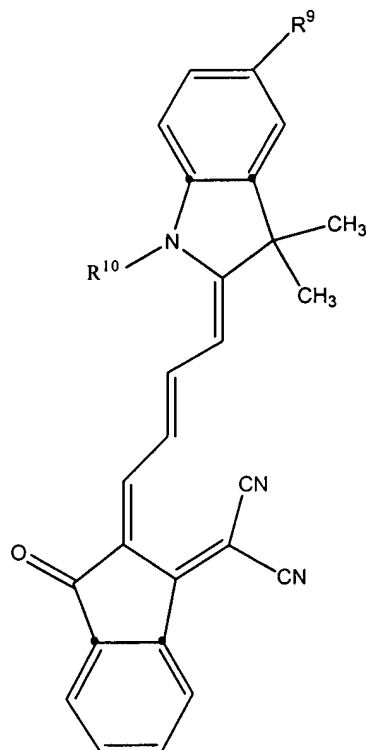
wherein each R⁹ and R¹⁰ is separately hydrogen, a charged group, a reactive group or an alkyl chain that can be derivatized with charged groups to enhance water solubility or with reactive groups for conjugation to other molecules.

89. (Currently amended) The compound of claim 84 having the formula:



wherein each R⁹ and R¹⁰ is separately hydrogen, a charged group, a reactive group or an alkyl chain that can be derivatized with charged groups to enhance water solubility or with reactive groups for conjugation to other molecules.

90. (Currently amended) The compound of claim 84 having the formula:



wherein each R⁹ and R¹⁰ is separately hydrogen, a charged group, a reactive group or an alkyl chain that can be derivatized with charged groups to enhance water solubility or with reactive groups for conjugation to other molecules.

91-92. (Canceled)